

1991

## Ray Ciarrochi: Landscapes 1978-91

University of Richmond Museums

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# Ray Ciarrochi

## LANDSCAPES 1978-91

PAINTINGS FROM THE DE LA BURDÉ COLLECTION

Published for the exhibition  
*Ray Ciarrochi: Landscapes 1978-91*

Marsh Gallery  
University of Richmond  
November 15 to December 15, 1991

The exhibition is made possible with the  
generous support of Roger de la Burdé and  
the University of Richmond Cultural Affairs  
Committee.

Cover:  
*Dusk*, 1984  
Oil on linen, 62 x 72 inches  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé

Photograph Credits:  
Adam Reich: *September Landscape* and *Late Sun*  
Plakke/Jacobs: *Morning Wetlands* and *Field by a River*  
Richard Walker: Ray Ciarrochi, 1991  
Katherine Wetzel: *Dusk*; *Early Evening*, *Cherry Valley Creek*; *Mountain Stream*; and *January Morning*

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November 15 to December 15, 1991

Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond, Virginia

## Note from the Collectors

Art has a sense of timelessness, and it conveys in its inspiration and creative energy the immeasurable force which we identify with the joy of living. My grandparents and parents have carried that belief and that spirit, continuing a long family tradition of collecting art. I am proud of that tradition and the honor of sponsoring this exhibition which continues the distinguished artists series at the University of Richmond Marsh Gallery.

The works of Ray Ciarrochi are an integral component of our contemporary art collection. His shimmering, ethereal landscapes merge the realms of both reality and dreams in an interplay of muted color and light. Their contemplative nature touches our inner need for serenity and peace while letting us sense the monumentality of our environment.

I am grateful to my parents, my art teachers, and my professors in both law and business for giving me the chance to grow and to value accomplishments. I would like to acknowledge here Dr. Richard L. Morrill, whose vision and leadership continue to set new dimensions for the fine arts at the University of Richmond. I would also like to thank Dean David Leary and Dr. Charles Johnson for their guidance and contributions. Exhibitions and catalogues such as this one require a great eye, intricate planning, and attention to detail, all attributes found in Richard Waller, the Director of the Marsh Gallery, for whom I reserve a special thanks.

Colette Alison de la Burd 

## Acknowledgments

The Marsh Gallery's distinguished artists series, originated by Joel Harnett (RC'45) and his wife Lila, has brought to the university over the past few years leading contemporary artists, including Robert Birmelin, Robert Colescott, Janet Fish, Philip Pearlstein, George Tooker, Jane Wilson, and Jerome Witkin. Now, through the support of Roger de la Burd , we add Ray Ciarrochi to this impressive list of distinguished artists.

My heartfelt thanks go to the artist, Ray Ciarrochi, who has been so helpful and gracious throughout the organization of the exhibition. His insight and thoughtfulness during the planning and selection of the exhibition, the preparation of the catalogue, and his residence here at the university during the opening days of the exhibition, have made the project a rewarding experience for all of us.

I am especially grateful to Roger de la Burd  and his daughters, Colette and Corinna, for their enthusiasm during the lengthy process of bringing together this selection of paintings from their contemporary art collection into this catalogue and exhibition. I warmly thank them for their patience and guidance. Thanks also go to Lawrence DiCarlo and Neil Winkel of the Fischbach Gallery for their cooperation in this exhibition.

Within the university, special thanks and acknowledgement go to Dr. David E. Leary, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Zeddie P. Bowen, Provost; and Dr. Richard L. Morrill, President; for their unstinting support of the Marsh Gallery and this exhibition project in particular. Special appreciation also goes to the faculty members of the Department of Art and Art History; to our student assistants in the gallery; and to Lynda Brown, our gallery assistant, for all her diligence.

The exhibition was made possible with the generous support of Roger de la Burd  and the University of Richmond Cultural Affairs Committee.

Richard Waller  
*Director, Marsh Gallery*



## Contemplating the Landscapes of Ray Ciarrochi

While apparently showing us a particular place, Ray Ciarrochi's landscapes are more about the exquisite moment of being in that place. His landscapes are at once aesthetic and metaphysical, achieving a unity of viewing nature with the transcendent power of that experience. His light, color, and paint carry us into a reflective mood where nature is calm and triumphant and we stand in harmony with our environment.

This exhibition covers the artist's involvement with the landscape over a span of thirteen years, beginning with a painting completed in 1978 and ending with a work done just a few short months ago. Rather than conspicuous changes over the years, we see in this selection a slow and meaningful evolution of themes and variations of the landscape as the artist continues to develop his oeuvre. This consuming interaction between the artist and the landscape is the thread that unifies these images into a singular encounter with nature.

These paintings take us to upstate New York, to an area around Cooperstown. We find ourselves in a bucolic world: trees standing majestically, cattails gently bending in the wind, fields of wildflowers awash with color, slow-moving streams reflecting the clouds and sky above, morning mist rising from distant mountains. It is a place where we have the time to notice how the colors change depending on the time of day, how the seasons bring their own changes of color and form to the landscape. In contrast to this locale where the artist spends most of his time, several paintings are included from the Southwest which give the artist a chance to deal with a different, perhaps more theatrical, nature. All of this serves to identify place and time for us, but Ciarrochi is not giving us a factual recording of the scene before him.

He offers us, instead, the essence of his experience of place. This causes in us an emotional response to something more sensed than expressed when we, too, stand in such a landscape. The topography is familiar somehow, we have all experienced a similar moment in a similar landscape. He paints a peaceful yet poignant image of our visual world where man has barely encroached upon, and certainly not overwhelmed, the environment. It is a still, quiet moment. His painting is a reminder of what we have and what we are now losing, a talisman we need to hold close. He

carries this message as surely and powerfully as the concurrent aesthetic experience in this subjective and evocative response to the natural beauty he finds around him.

Trained in abstraction, he asserts a certain freedom in his approach to the composition of the landscape, to establishing color harmonies and relationships, and even to the application of paint to the canvas. He uses what he sees as the basis to paint what he wants us to see. This allows him to use elements as he sees fit to evoke a particular mood and synthesize the act of seeing and feeling with the act of painting. Remaining a painter of our time with modernist concerns, Ciarrochi carries forward a genre of painting with a long tradition.

Nature's things (trees, flowers, grasses, rivers, hills), according to Kenneth Clark, are "objects of delight" that inspire us with curiosity and awe as we recreate them in our imaginations. We receive pleasure from viewing the untrammelled countryside through Ciarrochi's masterful painting of the elements of the landscape motif, of nature's things. As interpreter of this visual experience, he shows a deep understanding of our endless fascination with landscape. In looking at Ciarrochi's landscapes filled with these objects of delight, we enjoy both visual and mental delight as we are drawn into a contemplative time alone with nature.

Richard Waller

## Conversation with the Artist in his Studio

This conversation between Ray Ciarrochi and Richard Waller took place in the artist's studio in New York City on Sunday, September 15, 1991, and has been edited.

*Ray Ciarrochi and I are here in the studio looking at several of the paintings in the exhibition to use as points of reference and departure during our conversation. Surrounded by your landscapes, I will start by asking why the landscape? How did you come to landscape as your primary focus or concentration?*

Landscape seemed to be a subject that kept opening up for me, kept repeating more and more possibilities. I have always painted landscapes and also still lifes and the figure, but somehow the immersion in the landscape became stronger and stronger. Perhaps, because painting a landscape is essentially an abstract situation. I began as an abstract painter. There is so much you can do in the landscape. One can involve one's self in these forms one sees in a way that permits a certain amount of manipulation of space, the actual forms, and the colors. I grew up in Chicago and the French landscapes at the Art Institute were among the first paintings I remember seeing. After I went through an early period of working abstractly, I went back to these paintings and they triggered my response to the landscape.

*When did you start painting the landscape?*

When I went to Italy on a Fulbright grant in 1963, I had just started drawing from the figure. We were living outside Florence in the country. I began making small sketches, mostly drawings, of the landscape. I was abstracting from the landscape. These ideas I brought back with me.

*You went to Italy as an abstract painter?*

Essentially, yes. When I came back, I began drawing from the figure. I somehow felt abstract painting was limiting. Being in the studio, pulling these abstract, non-objective images out of one's self was limiting to me. Something was definitely missing for me. I wanted to look at things more closely. In

Chicago, then Washington University, I had very traditional training. I had also studied with several Abstract Expressionists, and when I came to New York in 1961 that was the way I was working. But I was doubting and questioning it at the time. I came to New York the year Kline died. But there were still several important Abstract Expressionists working: Joan Mitchell, and, of course, de Kooning. I never embraced the movement fully; it somehow seemed like a thing of the past. Later, I felt somewhat detached from the movement. I came to a point where I needed to re-examine my own past, to discover what I wanted.

*This self-examination brought you from abstraction to the landscape?*

When I came back from Europe, I went through a long period of adjustment. I went to Maine and that is when I first started to paint directly from the landscape. At the time there were a number of people painting the landscape. It was talked about, along with realism in general, and it became very much alive. There were enormous prejudices against it in New York. In California it was being given its due with people such as Diebenkorn, but even there it remained not as important as abstraction.

*And now?*

Realism is accepted for the most part now. After all, I am working in a long tradition in painting. But obviously, I paint very differently from someone in the nineteenth century. It is informed by twentieth-century art and concerns. When I started, I was going against the grain. I felt removed even though I felt it was valid. And now it is very accepted.

*Perhaps, we should talk about that tradition. I have just seen The Rise of Landscape Painting in France: Corot to Monet exhibition which traces the origins of modern landscape painting. How do you see yourself in relation to that tradition?*

When I first started painting, I looked at Cézanne. I studied French paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago. I studied their use of color, their use of paint. I came to American landscape painting later,



the Luminist painters. But it is the French involvement with paint that has held my attention rather than the American importance of rendering of the object. Even in Chardin, I see the importance of the paint. That is also what I like about the Abstract Expressionists. I respond to early Corot. In the exhibition you mention, one of his paintings brings together so perfectly light, forms, and color. The tonalities are adjusted so well; nothing is forced, it just comes alive. You find this amazing distillation.

*I think "distillation" is an excellent term to apply to your work. Are you striving for this quality?*

Yes. I work from very small sketches which are essentially for myself. I like being able to see them and reflect. Then there is a lapse of time where the image has had time to mature and deepen in my mind. Then I paint it. I like this quality in my work. Painting directly is also important to me.

*What is your process?*

The summer I spend in Cooperstown in upstate New York doing drawings outside and painting directly from the landscape in watercolor, gouache, or pastel. From those studies I find ideas for larger paintings that I work on in my studio here in New York throughout the winter. This has been my method for the past ten years. The bigger paintings involve changes, changes of what I feel now to what I felt then. I do stress this sense of memory. The sketches are not terribly elaborate.

*The gouaches and watercolors I have seen are very complete statements, in color and also in sense of place.*

That is often the case. If a study is too complete, you do not want to say anything more about that study. I do like a little openness that gives me room to get into it. I cannot literally copy a sketch, it would drive me crazy to do that.

*You have just come back from a summer of painting in the country. As I mentioned, we have been looking at quite a few gouaches and watercolors you have brought back with you. Will they become the basis of your next series of landscapes?*

Yes, some will. I do pencil sketches to determine the size of the painting, working with proportion and scale. From that, I do a relatively careful drawing. Once I have established all of this, I can begin the actual painting. The most difficult part of starting the painting is to get the essential color relationships going. I have been working with a color ground which is very important to me, and I let that show through as much as possible in the painting. Sometimes I use two colors for this tinted underpainting: one for the sky and one for the generalized earth part. This comes from the sketch. Once the basic palette is set and I have my tonalities established, the painting usually moves along quite well. One of the things I learned from abstraction was to make each painting a fresh experience, to approach it with an unbiased viewpoint. I try to see the landscape in a fresh way each time and to re-examine it in paint. I like ideas to come directly from the painting.

*Are the paintings approaching your original plein-air painting experience of the sketches?*

I try for the essence, not for a literal translation. I will change things to fit the composition. I may move my viewpoint, change sizes of certain elements, depending on where the painting is going. I want to keep the clarity and spontaneity.

*In a statement you made, you found plein-air painting on large canvas not to your liking. Was this because of the awkwardness of the scale or do you need these intermediate steps?*

Essentially I am an indirect painter. I need to mull things over. When you are working outside, things are constantly changing. Trees are moving, the wind changes direction, the light changes. You have to make decisions very quickly. What happens is often very beautiful. I will bring those things into the studio and work on them. I think it is important to do the plein-air sketches because of the immediacy of the relationships of color and shape you can only get by looking directly at the subject. Otherwise, it becomes too contrived. I must always come back to the original enthusiasm of what I saw.



*Let's talk about your choices of locale. In a review, Lawrence Campbell spoke of your landscapes as having a "mysterious air of uneventfulness." I thought that was a very telling remark.*

What he said is apt. I do like that feeling of suspension, of arresting time, of a certain moment. A stillness permeates. The last few years I have been doing paintings around six or seven o'clock when the wind dies down and it becomes quiet. I want to paint the enduring quality of landscape.

*Earth, air, and water. Water is a recurring motif for you.*

Water adds a strange spatial quality to the painting in contrast to the earth. With water I can reflect the sky, I can bring another idea into the painting. I can achieve a reversal, a circular movement with the earth.

*Are you trying to have us see this landscape in a particular way?*

I do not think of the viewer when I am painting, I do not think any artist does. I like to surprise myself with the painting. Some realist painters have a system for painting certain things. I try to invent as I go along, incorporate accidents. That idea keeps me painting.

*The Southwest paintings are quite a departure from the New York landscapes.*

I go there periodically. The color is so different there from the East, from upstate New York. I like the change: the color, the incredible sunsets, the colossal mountains.

*What are your other interests?*

I paint cityscapes here in New York, but the rigidity is limiting. I also paint still life and the figure. But they are secondary to my landscape painting interests. I draw a lot and that is an important prelude to my painting.

*Color is very central to your painting, more than just capturing local color of a particular landscape.*

To me, color and form are inseparable. One is the other, they are the same. Color informs everything in the painting. I do not paint heavily, I want to maintain the transparency and color even in the shadows. Color has always informed my paintings. I teach color theoretically, but I do not approach it theoretically in my painting. Color is based on a certain reality I see in the landscape. Beyond that it's a very personal color. I want the color to be evocative.

*Degas said "To be a great painter, you need to understand the complexities of landscape." Does this complexity keep bringing you back to the landscape?*

It is always changing. I can come back to the same landscape over and over and continue to explore its possibilities. I experience it. I saturate myself in the place. The tough solution is in the studio.

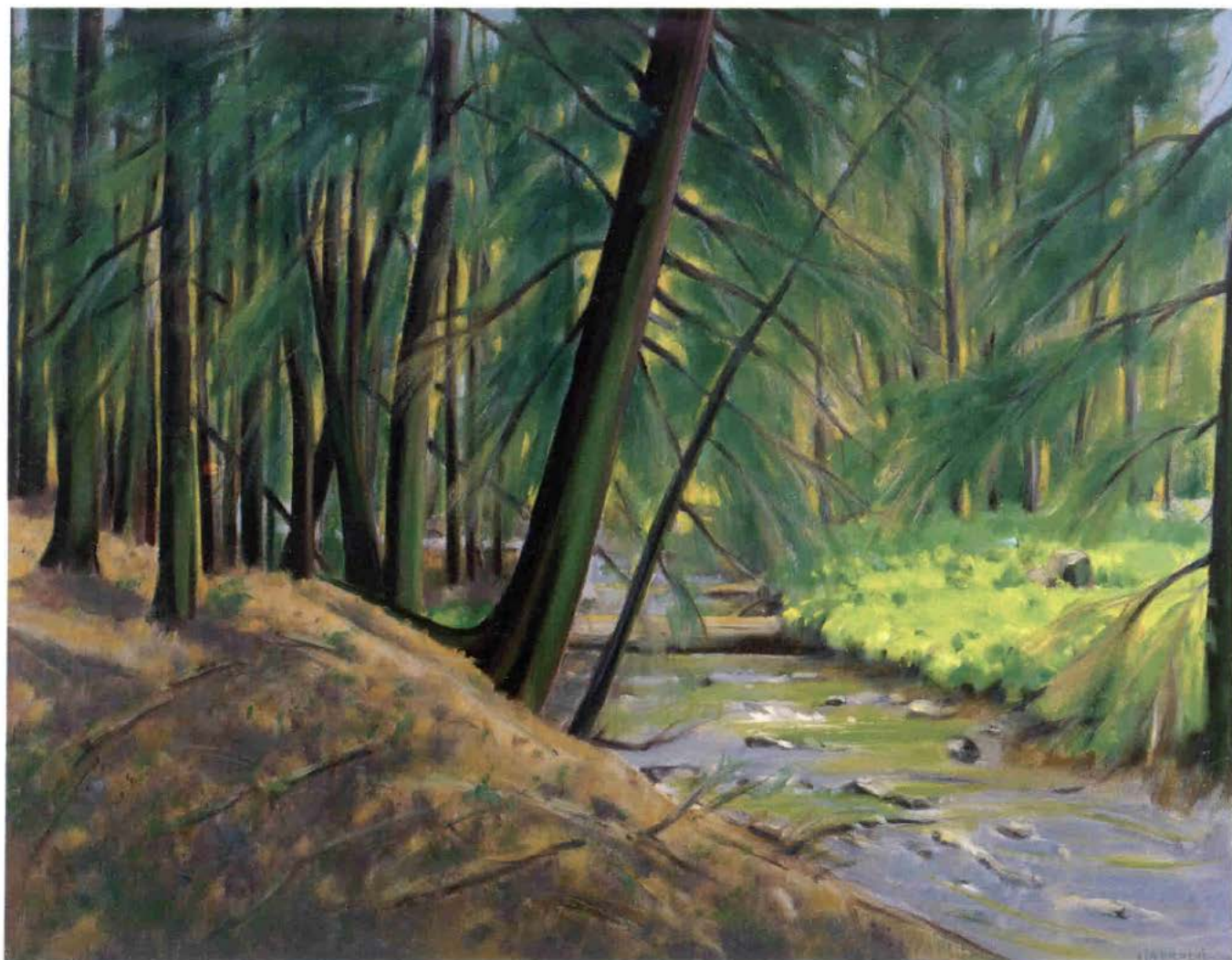
*Our exhibition covers thirteen years of painting the landscape. I do not see radical change but rather a very thoughtful growth that is slowly evolving.*

It continues to be a slow progression. The color relationships are more advanced now. The construction is more open, more dependent on color. Light and color have become my primary concerns. You never know where painting will lead you. I do not record reality in a literal way. I am reaching for the interpretive, subjective reaction beyond the obvious surface.



*Early Evening, Cherry Valley Creek, 1978, oil on linen, 28 x 34 inches*





*Mountain Stream*, 1979, oil on linen, 28 x 36 inches





*January Morning*, 1982, oil on linen, 58 x 68 inches



*Morning Wetlands*, 1987, oil on linen, 50 x 60 inches





*September Landscape*, 1989, oil on linen, 52 x 72 inches





*Field by a River*, 1990, oil on linen, 40 x 70 inches



*Late Sun*, 1990-91, oil on linen, 40 x 70 inches

# Biography

Born 1933 in Chicago

Resides in New York City and Cooperstown, New York

## Education

Studied, Chicago Academy of Fine Arts  
B.F.A. 1959, Washington University, St. Louis  
M.F.A. 1961, Boston University

## Awards

1982-83, 1977

Ingram Merrill Foundation Fellowship

1967

Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation

1965

The MacDowell Colony Residency

1963-64

Fulbright Grant, Florence, Italy

## Teaching

1990-present, 1965-70

Parsons School of Design, New York

1976-present

Baruch College, City University of New York

1976-89

Columbia University, New York

1972-80

Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York

1972-76

Brooklyn College, City University of New York

## Visiting Artist

1991

University of Richmond

1990

University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

1971-72

Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore

## Selected Individual Exhibitions

1991

*Ray Ciarrochi: Landscapes 1978-91*, Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond

1989, 87

Fischbach Gallery, New York

1987

*Winter White*, New York Stock Exchange



1985, 83, 80, 78, 76, 74, 72, 71

Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

1981-82

*Nijinsky - A View*, Joan Payson Whitney Gallery of Art, Westbrook College, Portland, Maine, and Gotham Book Mart Gallery, New York

## Selected Group Exhibitions

1991

*Against the Grain: Images in American Art, 1960-90*, Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, Pennsylvania

1990

*A Little Night Music - New York City at Night*, Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York

1988

*The Contemporary Landscape*, Associated American Artists, New York

*The Face of the Land*, Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, Pennsylvania

*24th Annual Art on Paper Exhibition*, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro, North Carolina



*Contemporary Landscape and Still Life*, Gallery 53,  
Cooperstown, New York  
*Artists East: Sixteen Artists*, The Gallery, Oneonta,  
New York

**1984**

*The Landscape*, Watson/de Nagy & Company,  
Houston, Texas  
*Works on Paper Invitational*, University of Tennessee,  
Knoxville

**1983**

*Monotypes*, State University of New York, Purchase

**1979**

*The Urban Landscape, Still Life and Figurative Paintings*,  
Pratt Manhattan Center Gallery, New York  
*Painterly Realism*, Watson/de Nagy & Company,  
Houston (traveled throughout the Southwest)

**1979, 78, 76, 74, 72**

Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston

**1978**

*Art on Paper*, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro,  
North Carolina

*118 Artists*, Landmark Gallery, New York

**1977**

*Artists Choice - Figurative Painting in New York City*,  
SoHo Center for Visual Arts, New York

*Works on Paper from the Ciba-Geigy Collection*,  
Neuberger Museum, Purchase, New York, and  
Wichita Falls Museum, Texas

*Ten Painters of Maine Landscape*, Landmark Gallery,  
New York

*Brooklyn College Art Department, Past and Present*,  
Schoelkopf and Davis & Langdale Galleries, New  
York

**1976**

Amarillo Art Centre, Texas

*Expressions from Maine*, Pepperdine University,  
Malibu, California, and Headley-Whitney Museum,  
Lexington, Kentucky

*76 Artists - A Bicentennial Exhibition*, Augusta State  
Museum, Maine

*American Watercolors: 1800 to the Present*, The  
Brooklyn Museum, New York

*The Open Window*, Fort Wayne Museum, Iowa

**1975**

American Academy and Institute of Arts and  
Letters, New York

**1972**

*Art Acquisitions*, University of Massachusetts,  
Amherst

*A.I.R. Artists in Residence*, Glassboro State College,  
New Jersey

American Academy and Institute of Arts and  
Letters, New York

**1971**

*Art on Paper*, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro,  
North Carolina

**1964**

*Artisti Fulbright*, Palazzo Venezia, Rome, Italy

### **Selected Bibliography**

**1991**

Julia Ayres, *Monotype - Painterly Printmaking*,  
Watson-Guptill, New York

**1989**

Lawrence Campbell, "Ray Ciarrochi at Fischbach,"  
*Art in America*, October issue

**1985**

Richard Saez, "Ray Ciarrochi," *Arts Magazine*, March

**1983**

Tram Combs, "Ray Ciarrochi, New Artist in Town,"  
*Woodstock Times* (New York), February 3

Nina A. Mallory, "Ray Ciarrochi's New Work," *Arts  
Magazine*, January

**1981**

Edgar Allen Beem, "Ray Ciarrochi: Nijinsky A  
View," *Art New England*, July/August

**1978**

Ellen Lubell, "Ray Ciarrochi," *SoHo News*,  
February 23

**1976**

Peter Frank, "Ray Ciarrochi," *Art News*, September  
Lou Kannenstine, "Ray Ciarrochi," *The 57th Street  
Review* (New York), March

**1974**

Lawrence Campbell, "Ray Ciarrochi," *Art News*,  
April

Hilton Kramer, "SoHo: Figures At An Exhibition,"  
*The New York Times*, March 2

**1972**

Barbara Schwartz, "Ray Ciarrochi," *Art News*, April  
James R. Mellow, "Ray Ciarrochi," *The New York  
Times*, March 1

## Checklist of the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches, height precedes width.  
Paintings listed from the collection of the artist are  
courtesy of Fischbach Gallery, New York.

### *Early Evening, Cherry Valley Creek*

1978, oil on linen, 28 x 34  
Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond,  
Gift of Roger de la Burdé  
(illustrated)

### *Mountain Stream*

1979, oil on linen, 28 x 36  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé  
(illustrated)

### *January Morning*

1982, oil on linen, 58 x 68  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé  
(illustrated)

### *Delaware*

1982-83, oil on linen, 74 x 86  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé

### *Dusk*

1984, oil on linen, 62 x 72  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé  
(illustrated, cover)

### *Summer Valley*

1984, oil on linen, 62 x 72  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé

### *Embarkation, Canyon Lake*

1984-85, oil on linen, 78 x 90  
Collection of Colette and Corinna de la Burdé

### *Moonrise, Canyon Lake*

1985, oil on linen, 68 x 80  
Collection of the artist

### *Morning Wetlands*

1987, oil on linen, 50 x 60  
Collection of the artist  
(illustrated)

### *Brilliant Sunset*

1988, oil on linen, 50 x 60  
Collection of the artist

### *Cherry Valley*

1988, oil on linen, 32 x 38  
Collection of Sylvia de la Burdé-Meys  
(not in exhibition)

### *Late Summer Painting*

1988, oil on linen, 32 x 40  
Collection of the artist

### *Midsummer*

1988, oil on linen, 32 x 40  
Collection of the artist

### *September Landscape*

1989, oil on linen, 52 x 72  
Collection of the artist  
(illustrated)

### *Field by a River*

1990, oil on linen, 40 x 70  
Collection of the artist  
(illustrated)

### *Sunrise, Solon Pond*

1990, oil on linen, 40 x 70  
Collection of the artist

### *Late Sun*

1990-91, oil on linen, 40 x 70  
Collection of the artist  
(illustrated)

### *Mesa*

1991, oil on linen, 40 x 48  
Collection of the artist



## MARSH GALLERY

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University of Richmond  
Richmond, Virginia 23173